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PEDAGOGICAL SECTION.

Professor Charles Harris, President of the Pedagogical Section of the Association, was called to the chair.

11. Discussion of "A New Method of Language Teaching" (William Victor, *Educational Review* for November, 1893).

(a) This discussion was opened by Dr. A. Rambeau, of Johns Hopkins University, with a paper on "The Value of Phonetics in Teaching Modern Languages." After reading his paper, Dr. Rambeau illustrated his own method of teaching the French sounds.

The discussion was continued by Professors A. N. van Daell, E. H. Magill, A. Cohn, L. E. Menger, A. B. Lyman and E. H. Babbitt.

(b) Dr. Starr W. Cutting, of the University of Chicago, turned the discussion to another aspect of the question with a paper entitled, "Should the Elementary Study of Grammar be Chiefly Inductive?"

In common with most educators, I deem the power to read and to understand a foreign author, with the rapidity and accuracy we command in the case of one who appeals to us in our mother-tongue, as the ideal towards which all efforts at teaching the elements of foreign languages in this country should consciously tend. Intelligent reading, as distinguished from mere pronunciation on the one hand, and from transliteration into the student's vernacular on the other, is always the fruit of an effective introduction into the spirit of the language studied. This means among other things: (1) an ability to easily recognize and reproduce the sounds of the language as they occur in complete sentences; (2) an accurate knowledge and instinctive feeling for the correct use of the forms of language included under the term *inflection*; (3) similar knowledge and feeling for the correct application of the elementary principals of syntax; and (4) an extensive vocabulary of common words and idioms, learned like the corresponding elements of the student's vernacular in daily practice.

It is the purpose of this paper to show that in view of this analysis inductive study of grammar is preferable to a study of so-called systematic grammar in the initial steps of the work. We do not forget that beginners are primarily concerned with learning the foreign language, and can, there-

fore, afford no training in grammar which does not assist as directly and effectively as possible in attaining this object. To treat the art of reading a foreign language intelligently and rapidly as a matter of secondary importance, in comparison with the mental discipline involved in a systematic study of its grammar, is to grasp at the shadow and lose the substance. For all discussion and classification of essentially empty forms and idioms,—empty because the language has not yet been learned,—is a bit of jugglery that deceives and disappoints both teacher and pupil. Hence, I believe direct study of a connected text, as easy, as natural, and as interesting as possible, to be a wise beginning of the work.

Recalling the fact that language is primarily a succession of sounds standing for a sequence of variously related ideas, and that the printed page is merely a series of visible symbols of these underlying vocal symbols, we emphasize the importance of pronunciation at the very outset. Only in the spoken as distinguished from the printed sentence do we find the characteristic *timbre* of the national thought.

Now the simple fact that the sound of each vowel and of each consonant is more or less modified by the character of its neighbors in the spoken sentence makes it impossible satisfactorily to teach the sounds of a language one by one at the start. On the contrary, their acquisition is always the fruit of patient repetition, not of separate sounds nor of single words, but of sentences and parts of sentences, on the part of the pupil, and of equally patient and conscientious correction, on the part of the teacher. The latter should, of course, be ready to supplement this imitative effort of the student by suggestions as to the correct use of the vocal organs, based upon an accurate knowledge of phonetics. Such a study of the teacher's oral treatment of a continuous text and of his hints as to the correct position of the organs of speech, as will secure to the pupil a thorough mastery of the foreign sounds, necessitates repeated experimentation on the part of the learner, and is, in spite of the large element of pure imitation involved, essentially an inductive process.

Passing to inflection we note at once that the paradigms of systematic grammar are not helpful in elementary language study, because they are largely meaningless to the beginner. They are classified statements of idea-relationships that the learner has never met with in actual use, and therefore never learned to appreciate. Such paradigms, even when carefully explained by an earnest teacher, are scarcely more intelligible to the pupil, at this stage of his work, than are the formulae of chemical reactions, when committed to memory without previous experimentation. Symbols when divorced from what they signify are extremely uninteresting. We observe them with indifference, derive no assistance from association of ideas in attempting to memorize them, and become discouraged, if not disgusted, as a result of this attempt to balance the cone upon its apex. It is difficult to see what class of pupils is benefited by paradigm-learning that precedes a consideration of some easy text, in which the relationships expressed by inflection are actually found.

Accurate study of these relationships under competent direction, in connection with a carefully chosen text, is chiefly valuable because it focusses the learner's attention upon differences of form as a reflex of differences of meaning. Such an inductive study leads the pupil to discover for himself the inner need out of which sprang that variety of form that seems to the student, who begins with paradigms of systematic grammar, a bewildering maze of arbitrary and meaningless signs. It is a recognition of the correctness of the views of Marcel expressed in the words:

"Particular grammar is an *inductive* art, as general grammar is an *inductive* science; and in all such arts or sciences we arrive at general principles by *inference* from facts: the more numerous they are, the more easily and the more certainly are the principles ascertained. The student, ambitious to master the grammar of a language, should first diligently collect facts, examine them in all their bearings, and compare them with each other; he may afterwards sum up the results of his investigations. It is only after a careful analysis of facts that we can generalize and classify them."¹ The memory grasps and retains principles that shed light upon personally observed facts, because of the vivid interest and resulting close attention of the acquiring mind. This is doubtless one of the sound psychological principles, whose recognition has led so many educators on both sides of the Atlantic to agree in theory and practice with the motion unanimously adopted by the neo-philological section of the Philologists' Congress held at Dessau, 1884: "That the reading-book should be the starting-point and center of instruction in French and English, and that the grammar should at first only be treated inductively." It is interesting to note that subsequent discussion and experiment led the same body to reiterate, in the second of five theses, adopted the following year (1885) at Giessen, the substance of this motion, in its bearing upon grammar. This thesis reads: "The grammar should, as far as possible, be treated inductively." As fourth heading of the programme of the "Association Phonétique des Professeurs de Langues vivantes," founded by M. Paul Passy in 1886, we read: "The grammar should at first be taught inductively, as a corollary and a generalization of the facts that have been observed during the reading, a more systematic study of it being kept for the end." These statements are in line with the view of Wilhelm von Humboldt: "Eine Sprache kann unter keiner Bedingung wie eine abgestorbene Pflanze erforscht werden. Sprache und Leben sind unzertrennliche Begriffe, und die Erlernung ist in diesem Gebiet immer nur Wiedererzeugung."² But while the first steps of inflection-learning should be experimental, it by no means follows that the knowledge thus acquired is sufficient for the purpose of the learner.

¹ Marcel: *Language as a Means of Mental Culture*, Book VI, Chapter III, Sec. I.

² Wilhelm von Humboldt: *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 6. *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues*, Sec. 13, p. 112. (Berlin, 1848.)

In the words of the late Professor Hermann B. Boisen: "Mere knowledge of grammatical principles, however clear, does not in itself secure their constant and correct application; but exercise, frequently repeated and judiciously conducted, must render their application habitual and independent of the will. Mere *kennen* is thus matured into *können*."¹

Only those students whose inductive investigation of inflection has been strengthened by a running application of the principles discovered to fresh material, and to new combinations of the old, can attain real mastery of the subject. For let us not forget that, to read with ease and rapidity any language, we need, first of all, such an instinctive feeling for word-form, that we are no longer mentally wearied by the jolts and jars caused by our repeated surprises at the odd appearance of the syllables that meet our eye. The pupil should learn to use from day to day the inflectional elements, already studied, in oral and written sentences, based upon the material afforded by the text and by the explanatory additions of the instructor. The necessity of this progress from analysis through comparison and generalization to synthesis is almost universally recognized by those educators who regard as wise the inductive treatment of the elementary grammar. We note, for instance, in the resolution of the neo-philological section of the Philologists' Congress, held at Dessau in 1884, the words already quoted "that the grammar should at first only be treated inductively;" and again in the programme of the *Association Phonétique des Professeurs de Langues vivantes* the statement that "the grammar should at first be taught inductively, as a corollary and a generalization of the facts that have been observed during the reading, a more systematic study of it being kept for the end." Both of these utterances seem to recognize the importance of systematic grammar as the final instead of the initial step of the work. They are also consistent with the view already expressed that oral and written application of the student's own inferences as to the formal elements of the language are an indispensable adjunct to any and all merely passive study of these elements. The fifth and sixth divisions of Professor Wilhelm Viëtor's "Sketch of a Reform Lesson," *Educational Review*, November, 1893, p. 359, are a direct corroboration of this latter point: "(5) Cause the class to answer questions (in the foreign language) on the text read, to relate the contents in their own words, eventually introducing variations as to tense, person, number, etc. (6) Let them find out and arrange new words and phrases with a view to their meaning and logical connection; also, in like manner, grammatical forms, etc. (grammatical 'rules' to be formed by the class under the assistance of the teacher)." This is *Wiedererzeugung* in the sense intended by Wilhelm von Humboldt in the passage already referred to.

Turning now to elementary syntax and remembering that it is the expression of certain thought-relationships entirely unfamiliar to the beginner,

¹ Hermann B. Boisen: *First Course in German*, p. x. (Boston, 1881.)

we perceive at once why the sentence is most effectively studied at the outset by analysis, comparison, and inference. This involves wise retrenchment of material, since the scaffolding of thought, studied in connection with the reading and discussion of a continuous text, presents itself only gradually, and does not intrude itself upon the learner's attention as a system of forms to be memorized straightway, for the sake of a future chance to see how well or how ill actual speech usage tallies with it. And yet, here too, the element of drill, based upon knowledge of syntax thus inductively acquired, is as indispensable to an effective grasp of the subject, as in case of inflection. It is not enough for us to *know* the syntactical forms of a language; we must also be able to recall and to use these elements in new combinations of the vocabulary already learned. Only this cultivation of the active as distinguished from the passive memory renders possible face to face communion with the foreign author. For, when our power of attention, which is always strictly limited, is largely occupied with inflectional and syntactical externals, the remaining fraction is inadequate to a full and easy comprehension of the text read.

Inductive comparison of English with foreign idiom is one of the most effective means of penetrating into the spirit of the language to be learned. This should, however, consist chiefly in seeking foreign equivalents for the familiar thought-processes of the student's vernacular. Thus the learner's attention is focussed upon the syntactical resources of the foreign idiom, the subject with which he should be chiefly concerned. Hence extensive translation into the pupil's mother-tongue is defensible only on the ground that discipline in *it* is of prime importance, in comparison with which actually learning the foreign language is a secondary matter. Even if necessary at first as a test of the student's grasp of the meaning, such translation can and should be used sparingly at the outset, and gradually be supplanted by explanations and questions in the language studied. Such explanations and questions are, at the same time, a supplement to the material of the text, variable in quantity and quality at the discretion of the instructor. They give an opportunity for a simultaneous presentation of several related forms for inductive study, whenever this seems wiser than waiting for the gradual appearance of all these forms in the regular course of the work. This answers in part, too, the chief objection of those who find the inductive study of elementary grammar too slow. I shall treat this point more fully in my discussion of the matter of vocabulary, to which I now turn in conclusion.

Nothing is more important in the whole economy of the work of language-learning than the acquirement of an effective vocabulary. Such a vocabulary must be as accurate as possible and should be as extensive as is consistent with the requisite accuracy. It must include (1) a store of single words, and (2) a well digested group of idiomatic phrases and sentences. How can these items be most directly and satisfactorily acquired? My answer is, in brief, by *inductive reading*. This should not be too copious at the

start. I am convinced that the average student reads more in the first few months than he can possibly assimilate. A thorough mastery of the vocabulary of one short story like Storm's *Immensee*, including every word and every idiom, is far more conducive to thoroughness and rapidity in the student's subsequent work, than an indifferent knowledge of five hundred pages of prose. Intensive rather than extensive cultivation of the text studied is fruitful in command of the language. How can this intensive work best be done? I reply, by studying words and idioms in groups of related individuals. The principle of association of ideas renders it far easier to retain in the memory several related idea-signs or thought-signs than a single symbol of either sort taken by itself. Advantage may be taken of a large variety of close or loose relationships, as (1) *essential* or merely *formal resemblance*, (2) *contrast*, (3) *identity of stem*, (4) *ablaut* or *umlaut*, (5) *identity of root*, (6) *similarity of form or meaning to corresponding elements* of the student's *mother-tongue*, etc. The earnest teacher will not be at a loss in this respect, and will find his students intensely interested and therefore successful in grasping and holding almost incredibly large amounts of the foreign vocabulary, presented and studied inductively in the light of these relationships. Such study insures at once thoroughness and speed. It may be guided so deftly and so logically by the skillful instructor that the learner's vocabulary shall contain those elements most desirable, in view of his subsequent use of it. Beginning with a rigid application of the inductive principle, it cultivates constantly the habit of close observation, is a good discipline in exercise of the judgment, and insures, when supplemented by a judicious amount of suitable written and oral exercises, testing the thoroughness of the work, an effective vantage ground from which to attack the difficulties of classic style.

In the absence of its author, this paper was read by Professor Charles Harris. Remarks upon it were made by Professor E. H. Magill.

Mr. and Mrs. William D. Cabell gave a reception to the members of the Association at the Norwood Institute, from 8 to 11 p. m.

MORNING SESSION (Friday, December 29).

The President called the Association to order at 10 o'clock.

12. "The Pistojesse Dialect." By Dr. James D. Bruner, of the University of Illinois.